

## MEMORANDUM

On the Discussion of the German Foreign Minister  
with Ambassador OSHIMA on 6 March 1943

Ambassador OSHIMA declared that he had received a telegram from Tokyo, and he is to report to the German Foreign Minister, by order of his government, the following:

The suggestion of the German Government to attack Russia was the subject of a mutual conference between the Japanese Government and Imperial Headquarters, in which the question was exhaustively discussed and minutely probed. The result was the following:

The Japanese Government thoroughly recognizes the danger which threatens from Russia and has full understanding for the desire of its German ally, that Japan, too, enters into the war against Russia. It is not possible for the Japanese Government, however, in view of her present war situation to enter into the war. It is rather of the conviction that it is in the common interest, not to start the war against Russia now. On the other hand, the Japanese Government will never disregard the Russian question.

The Japanese Government has the intention to once again, in the future, take the offensive on the other fronts.

In the declaration of the Ambassador, the German Foreign Minister asked how one conceived, in Tokyo, the future waging of the war. At present, Germany is to a great extent waging war against the common enemies, England and America, alone, while Japan is taking a rather defensive stand. However, it would be more in order if all the powers bound by the Tripartite Pact joined all their forces to jointly defeat not only England and America, but Russia as well. It is not good when one part must fight alone. One should not overstrain the German people's strength. In secret he is concerned that forces could be at work in Tokyo, who are of the opinion -- and who also propagate it -- that Germany would conclude the fight victoriously anyway, and Japan should therefore further consolidate herself before it would make further and supreme efforts.

The U.S.A. and England were pursuing the strategy that the Allies should at first turn all their strength against Germany and Italy alone, and had also expressed this in CASABLANCA completely openly as their program. Actuality has confirmed this until now. Unfortunately, Ambassador SATO in KUIBYSHEV has apparently delivered to the Russians in this matter the assurance of the absolute neutrality

of Japan. However, we had to undergo the experience that on the Eastern Front -- especially in STALINGRAD also -- fresh Siberian division had fought. We would nevertheless attack the Russians again and again. The situation on the Eastern Front had stabilized itself and a stable German Front had been established except for a small, still existing, gap. However, at the same time we have to fight against England and America more or less by ourselves in Africa, in the air and on all the oceans as well.

Compared with this, Japan's share was small. Even the battle area in BURMA was small in comparison. Tokyo must therefore understand it when Germany raises the question of whether in the spirit of waging the joint war, it is the correct strategy for Japan not to make full use of her people's strength, while Germany's is strained to the limit. He would like to emphasize again that if Germany would ever become weak, Japan would find herself facing a world coalition which would consist not only of England, America and Russia, but the people's strength /VOLSKRAFT/ of all the countries on earth, as well as that of a bolshevized Europe. The question was therefore raised whether at this time so exceedingly decisive for the outcome of the war, the strength of the allies was properly distributed and was really being used in the spirit of a joint, total conduct of the war.

Ambassador OSHIMA answered that what decided the issue for Japan was whether she had sufficient forces and whether her armament capacity was sufficient in order to attack and defeat the Russians, in addition to the enemies Japan already has, without endangering her operations on the other fronts. Tokyo is afraid of splitting its forces. On the other hand Japan's attitude was in no way purely defensive and just waiting, but a new attack against the U.S.A. and the British will surely take place. Even though he has no detailed reports concerning this, he personally believes that this attack will come in the direction of the Indian Ocean. In any case, however, the belief in an inseparable mutual victory of the allies was a foregone conclusion for Tokyo.

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The German Foreign Minister commented at this point that an infraction of mutual trust was naturally completely out of the question, since this was unshakeable between Germany and Japan. In the matter of the inquiry which was brought up, it was solely a question of the joint conduct of the war, the strategy which is to be jointly carried out, that is, the proper use of the common strength. Germany entirely understands that Japan must first finish constructing her newly won bases and positions and must consolidate her forces. Japan had done this for a year and now

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when Germany is bearing the brunt of the struggle, Japan should be in a position to be able to apply a new decisive blow against the common enemy. It was in no way a question of mutual trust, but he sometimes is concerned that Japan has the intention of consolidating her forces for yet another year and only later starting a new attack.

Upon this the Ambassador replied that he did not think so. The intentions of the military leaders in his fatherland were unknown to him; nevertheless, he knew that for a long time Japan had the intention of turning against Russia. But for the time being she evidently did not feel strong enough to do so. If one withdrew the front in the South and abandoned several islands to the enemy in order to shift all forces to the North, this could be possible. This would, however, mean a heavy defeat in the South. Both an advance to the South, and at the same time to the North was impossible for Japan.

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The German Foreign Minister then once more brought up the question of a Japanese attack on Russia, by stating that the struggle on the Burma Front as well as in the South was more of a maritime problem and that actually only a few land troops were being employed on all fronts, excepting China. The attack on Russia was therefore in the first place a matter for the Army and the consideration was whether the necessary forces were nevertheless ready for this. OCHIMA replied that the bulk of the Japanese Army was bound in China and on the Burma Front the forces were by no means insignificant either. If Japan should want to attack Russia, she would have to bring almost all the troops from the South into Manchuria. In any case, one did not have enough troops in order to be able to attack Russia with the firm prospect in an early victory. In case the Russians are the attackers, one is naturally armed. But for an attack on them, insufficient forces were ready.

At the end of March or early April of this year, a few officers, cloaked as couriers and Embassy Secretaries, will come here from Tokyo in order to deliver particulars concerning the situation and Japan's military forces and plans. He will be able to draw a better picture/of matters/ there when these have arrived. The ambassador emphasized again that Japan was unwilling to take up a defensive attitude.

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Concerning the division of strength on the Russo-Japanese front, the Ambassador remarked that the Japanese fighting forces were greatly inferior to those of the Russians. The Japanese General Staff has a very exact view over the state of the Red



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Far Eastern Army, on the basis of a carefully expanded /ausgebaut/ spy net on the Russian side where many Koreans were working for them as spies. One has an exact idea of the position of the bunkers, the thickness of the bunkers, etc. The general strength of the Russian Army amounts to 800,000 men. It was quite natural that the Russians left so many troops at the frontier, as in the course of their history they had always until now made extremely unpleasant experiences with surprise attacks on the part of Japan.

Concerning our reports on Russia's imports from the U.S.A. via VLADIVOSTOK, OSHIMA learned that Japan allowed the Russians only one seaway, and that on this seaway all ships are searched for arms and ammunition. The Japanese Government has no particulars concerning American delivery of war materials over this way. However, it was known to him that the Americans were maintaining an airline from Alaska to Siberia. This goes from FAIRBANKS, ANADYR, JAKUTSK to KRASNOJARSK and some material, of value to the Russians, would certainly be delivered over it.

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In that the German Foreign Minister expressed the hope that Japan will soon be able to conduct an effective shipping war from her far advanced bases against the enemy lines of supply, and after Ambassador OSHIMA once again expressed his thanks for the German willingness in the name of his Government, the German Foreign Minister bid goodbye to the Ambassador

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